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Mate selection and marital expectations: Examination of a modern college cohort

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Introduction

Examining cohort effects of mate selection has occurred for several decades. Much of the research is based on Hill's classic 1945 study *Campus Values in Mate Selection*. Hill formulated 18 factors important in mate selection. These factors have been utilized in several studies, including a recent cross-cultural investigation (Stone, Shackelford, & Buss, 2006). Marital expectations can be framed in an epigenetic model that includes the importance of an ideal partner (Juvva & Bhatti, 2006). The goals of this descriptive study were twofold: (1) to identify the factors important in mate selection to a modern cohort of college students and (2) to examine ideals and expectations as related to marriage. In part, this study replicated previous studies. It expanded upon such studies by examining participants' expectations and ideals as related to marriage.

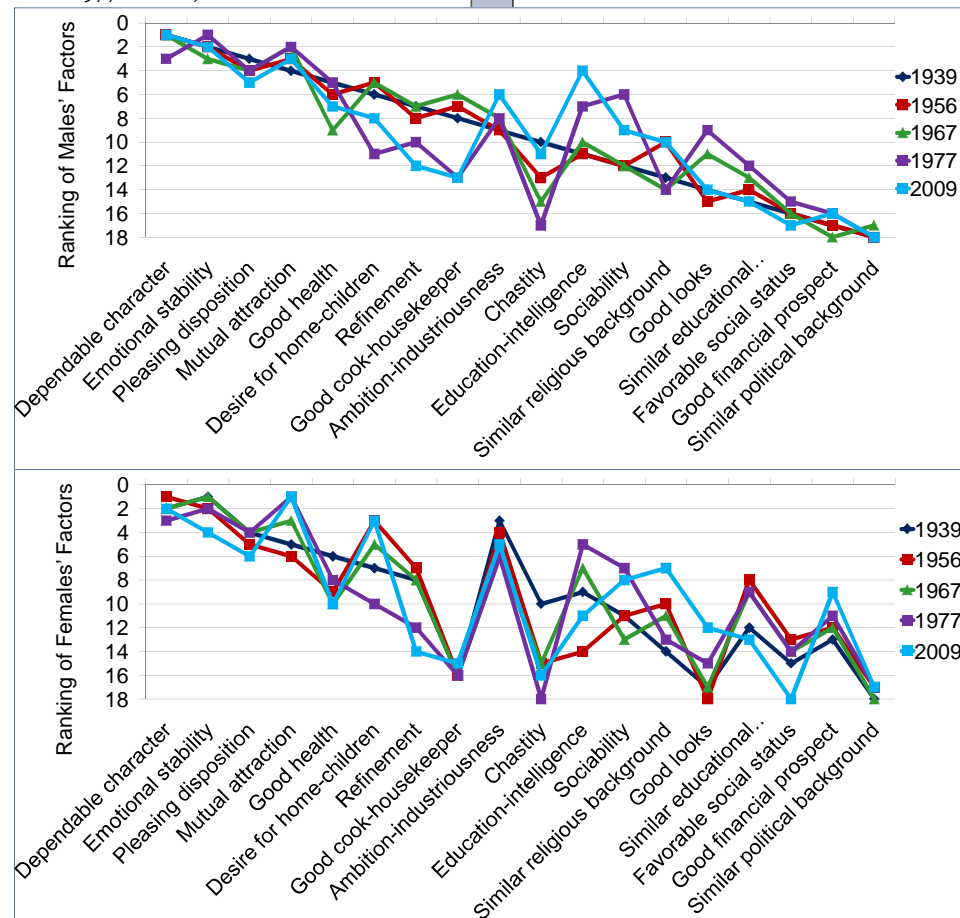
Methods

Data were gathered on desirable characteristics in a mate and the degree to which expectations about marriage were idealized. Undergraduate students enrolled in marriage and family life courses participated in this study ($n=30$). Baseline and follow-up measures were completed. Two scales were utilized at each interval: the Campus Values Questionnaire (Hill, 1945) and the PREPARE Inventory (Marriage Expectations and Idealistic Distortions subscales; Fowers & Olson, 1992). Two-thirds of the participants were females, and 17% were married. Other demographic characteristics were reflective of the campus population.

Results

Current rankings of Hill's 18 factors were compared to those from other data points over a 60-year time span. Dependable character remains a top priority in males in mate selection. Placing second with males was emotional stability, as was seen in 1939 and 1956 cohorts. For females, there was more variability in factors, though the top priority in the current sample was the same as the 1977 cohort, mutual attraction.

Dependable character placed second in the current sample, as seen in 1939 and 1967. Over the years, chastity has steadily declined as a priority of males, though in the present sample its rank was similar to the original cohort. For females, a similar pattern has emerged. Similar political background and favorable social status continue to remain low priorities in a mate. With regard to idealistic distortions, there were no significant sex or pre/post



differences. In terms of marriage expectations, males scored significantly lower ($p=.027$) on one item: "increasing the amount of time we spend together will automatically improve our relationship." There were no significant pre/post differences.

Conclusions

Results indicated that mate selection values are similar today as they have been historically, and that males and females have similar ideals and expectations about marriage. Traits such as dependable character and emotional stability have consistently been regarded as indispensable. An educational curriculum had no significant impact on their views. Additional data are being gathered to increase sample size and are under analysis presently. Furthermore, a longitudinal component will be implemented.

References

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For further information

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